



State agency drunk on its own power

You've got to hand it to the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission, a state agency that has an amazing grasp of the obvious.

Over six months, TABC agents issued 2,281 criminal citations to people in Texas bars, many of them cited because they were drunk.

Isn't busting people for being drunk at a bar like shooting a bass in a bathtub? I mean, where else are you going to find drunks? At a University of Texas football game?

But hats off to the TABC for being clever enough to realize that if you're looking for drunks, a bar where alcohol is served is a great place to start.

I think it's time we re-wrote the old Texas tourism motto to say: "Texas: It's Like a Whole 'Nother Country — Saudi Arabia."

You're not supposed to drink in Saudi Arabia, and, after hearing what the TABC is doing with its undercover agents in Texas bars, it's become pretty obvious you're not supposed to drink in Texas, either.

So if you're a tourist from another state trying to settle on a destination, and you drink, you might want to think about spending your vacation money somewhere else. Try someplace nice where they won't mess with you, like maybe New Mexico.

One purpose of the sting is to keep people from presenting a danger to themselves. At least one bar targeted was a hotel bar in Irving. Maybe this was done to cut down on the number of hotel guests falling out of bed.

Going to a bar to arrest drunks: That would be like going out to the golf course and busting people for putting.

Or, better still, it would be like going to a Girl Scout meeting and busting the girls for making s'mores.

"Course, now we're getting into legitimate arrests.

"Maybe they should get somebody to go into the Golden Corral and arrest all the lardasses," said my friend Scott Wilson, who has been known to tip a few on special occasions, like Saturday.

I can hear it now from the food cop who raids the Golden Corral: "Sir, step away from the gravy and put your fork down where I can see it."

I never have understood why Texas needs an alcoholic beverage commission in the first place. Just about every town — except for Bartlett — has its own police force, every county has a sheriff's department, and we have a state agency of cops known as the Department of Public Safety. Don't you suppose there are enough officers to enforce booze laws without having a special department?

And, if all these TABC people have to do is hang out in bars and go after drunks, I think that proves my point. I think the whole bunch should be given useful jobs mowing the Capitol lawn or something. Certainly we can find some worthwhile work for these folks to do.

You know what message this sting sends out to drinkers? The message is this: Instead of drinking with your friends in a bar and listening to country music and carrying on an interesting conversation, you should be drinking at home alone.

Isn't that the sort of thing that leads to a SWAT team out front with a bullhorn?

John Kelso's column appears on Sundays, Tuesdays and Fridays. Contact him at 445-3606 or kelso@statesman.com.



Rodolfo Gonzalez AMERICAN-STATESMAN
Savannah McElroy was going to show her heifer Special on Saturday, but nature intervened. Above, she and dad Clint work with another member of the family herd.

A new life begins on rodeo's last day

Special delivery wraps up two weeks of rides and shows

By Marty Toohey
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

As the auctioneer's calls for cattle bids echoed through the building, a jet-black newborn calf fell awkwardly after struggling to its knees.

His mother, a 2-year-old heifer named Special, gently nudged him, and he once again began struggling to rise.

This was not the plan. Special was to be displayed Saturday to judges at the Star of Texas Fair and Rodeo's livestock competition. She was scheduled to give birth a week later.

Nature interrupted. And on Saturday morning, the last day of the rodeo,

On statesman.com/multimedia: Take in the sights and sounds from the Star of Texas Fair and Rodeo's carnival.

Special's owner, 13-year-old Savannah McElroy of New Braunfels, noticed the jet-black heifer going into labor. About 2 p.m. the family's herd of seven cattle grew by one.

The rodeo opened March 10 with sneak-peek carnival rides.

Over the next two weeks, it brought pony rides, a petting zoo, puppet shows, professional bull riding, sheep-dog trials

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A first look at Austin's future U.S. courthouse



U.S. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Courthouse planned for Intel property



Jay Janmer 2006 AMERICAN-STATESMAN
The shell of what would have been Intel Corp.'s chip design center, a downtown eyesore for years, will soon be razed.

The U.S. General Services Administration will unveil the design for the new U.S. courthouse in downtown Austin at a public meeting Monday at the University of Texas School of Architecture. Designed by Mack Scogin Merrill Elam Architects of Atlanta, the courthouse will be located on the block west of Republic Square Park, bounded by Fourth, Fifth, Nueces and San Antonio streets, where the incomplete Intel Corp. building now stands. The seven-story, 211,690-square-foot courthouse is expected to cost \$63 million. It will have eight courtrooms as well as associated facilities for the U.S. Marshals Service, U.S. attorney, General Services Administration and district clerk, and the federal offices for probation and pretrial services. Check statesman.com Monday afternoon for more information.

Inaugural 'ball' celebrates Earth-friendly living

Folks at fair find music, eco-wares and lessons about being green

By Suzannah Gonzales
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

It's not about being crunchy anymore. And it's not about the high-end or luxury, either.

A "sustainable" lifestyle is about being socially aware and living in a way that doesn't worsen global warming or deplete resources, said Chris Searles of Good Common Sense.Net.

Searles was one of about 60 vendors — all businesses or nonprofit organizations that encourage a more sustainable future — who set up shop Saturday as part of the first Sustainable Shopper's Ball, a fair promoting green living, next to the Sunset Valley Farmers Market at Burger Center in Southwest Austin.

"We're growing faster than the environment can sustain us," Searles said. "The more we realize that we have no other choice than to live in balance with the environment, the longer we'll be here and



Kelly West AMERICAN-STATESMAN
Children add to a mural Saturday at the inaugural Sustainable Shopper's Ball, held at Burger Center in Southwest Austin. The paint? Eco-friendly, of course.

See **GREEN**, B6

Capitol 10K runner has marathon endurance

67-year-old has run race 27 times through tumor, cancer surgery

By Andrea Ball
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Nothing keeps Margie Perry from the Statesman Capitol 10,000.

Not a brain tumor. Not breast cancer. Not a mastectomy or multiple foot surgeries.

And come April 2, barely four months after reconstructive breast surgery, the 67-year-old Rosenberg resident will run in her 28th consecutive Cap 10K.

"It's a psychological boost for me," Perry said. "It keeps me on track. Just doing it one time a year means I have to keep going."

The 29th annual Cap 10K, a 6.2-mile run, is the largest 10K in Texas. Last year's race attracted more than 13,000 participants, some serious, some silly, some flat-out goofy.

There are the competitive runners, the ones who complete the course in 30 minutes or so. Then there are the folks in but, snail or superhero costumes. And let's not forget the guy who runs the whole race backward every year.

Come sleet or scorching heat (and yes, there have been both),

See **RUN**, B3

On statesman.com: Want to participate in the 29th annual Statesman Capitol 10,000? Go to statesman.com/cap10k.

Schools aim to curb furor with policy on closings

By Raven L. Hill
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Shifting growth patterns have been the bane of Austin's urban campuses for decades, leaving the school district to make tough choices about which ones to close or reformat because of falling enrollment.

Now, hoping to avoid the turmoil that has accompanied the most recent round of proposed closings, the district plans to develop a policy to guide future decisions. Talks will begin later this year, but trustees could vote on closing two elementary school campuses — Becker and Oak Springs — on Monday.

"As the district continues to grow and the housing patterns in the Austin community continue to change, it behooves the district to have a very defined and a very public process," spokesman Andy Welch said, "so that everyone knows what the terms of the engagement are."

Questions about a campus' efficiency begin to arise when

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